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SERMON III.*

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SOME OF THE PROVIDENTIAL LESSONS OF 1861.

"I WILL remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God! Thou art the God that doest wonders: thou hast declared thy strength among the people."—PSALM 77: 11-14.

THE close of the year has always been regarded as a period well adapted to a serious review of life. On reaching it, a thoughtful man will instinctively turn back to consider the path he has been traveling, and the principles which have guided him. It is quite impossible to attain a high degree of personal wisdom and culture without occasional seasons of calm, honest self-inspection; and there is a natural fitness in the closing of the year for such a task. It is a favorable moment, also, for considering the ways of God, and studying those great principles by which he governs the world. I recollect hearing the celebrated Professor Ritter, of Berlin, remark, that if one wished to understand the configuration of the earth, he should begin by going forth into

* Preached on Sunday afternoon, December 29th, 1861.

nature, and observing carefully the structure of the hills and plains just about him; he would thus become virtual master of the laws which explain the geography of the globe. The saying is not inapplicable to the course of Providence. He who marks well the manner in which God governs the world for a single year, will have little difficulty in understanding the general principles upon which he has governed it from the beginning, and will continue to govern it to the end of time. "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations." There is no caprice, no vacillation in Providence. It is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Although as free as it is almighty, both its freedom and its power are immutable. Its methods may and do differ; some of them being plain to every eye, while others are exceedingly involved and obscure, baffling human insight; but its principles and end never change; and they are always most wise, just, beneficent, and true. Like the roots of the everlasting hills, a part of God's designs may be deep out of sight; but like the summit and massive sides of those same hills, seen under a clear sky, how distinct, grand and substantial are oftentimes the visible parts! As we contemplate them, how they seem to lift us to the very heavens and to inspire us with the consciousness of a strength and repose immovable like their own!

Let us spend a few moments, then, in looking back over the year on whose outermost verge we now stand, and gathering up some of the lessons which it so impressively teaches us. I say *us*; for although its events, I do not doubt, are intended for the ultimate instruction of mankind, we are the party principally concerned with them at present. Foreigners and foreign nations may be prepared to understand their import by and by; we see that they are not at all prepared now. It is a domestic, American trouble; we are the chief actors and the chief sufferers; and whatever the issue, whether good or bad, ours will be the immediate gain or loss. What the next year may bring forth, we can not tell; the circle of trouble may be so widened as to reach the Old World and involve other nations; but even should that occur, which may it please Heaven to forbid! the stress of conflict will still be here; and we shall still be the foremost actors and sufferers. God is plainly executing in the United States one of those great historic movements which notch the centuries; and he is not likely to be diverted from his foreordained plan by any foreign interference whatever. The strategy of Providence is exceedingly sagacious, comprehensive, and far-reaching; and is very apt to be successful, let who will attempt to thwart it.

What, then, are some of the more obvious lessons taught us by the momentous events of 1861?

1. I reply, first of all, that God really governs the world. I

know we all professed to believe this in 1860, and never remember the day, perhaps, when it was not a leading article of our creed. Providence itself, as well as the Bible, had often impressed it upon us. But who is not ready to confess that the course of events during the past year has taught this truth, especially as it regards our national life and affairs, with an emphasis altogether extraordinary! How dimly the most of us had been wont to perceive God's hand in sustaining our republican institutions and government! We had almost come to feel that the Union and Constitution and liberties of our country needed no divine support; that they were as incapable of being overthrown as the Alleghanies or the Rocky Mountains; yea, as the great globe itself. But we have been rudely awakened out of this delusive dream. We have seen our idolized ship of state going upon those fearful breakers, which we knew had proved the grave of many a powerful and renowned government; we have listened through long, long months of agony to the creaking of her timbers, the dreadful sound of the rocks and the fury of the raging sea, until at length it became clear to us as noonday, that only one Pilot was wise enough or strong enough to weather the storm and save her from utter, hopeless wreck; and that was the Almighty Pilot, who planned and built the ship! And how well He has thus far justified our confidence! "If it had not been the Lord, who was on our side, now may Israel say: If it had not been the Lord who was on our side when men rose up against us; then the waters had overwhelmed us; . . . then the proud waters had gone over our soul." I have recently called your attention to the many irresistible proofs that we owe our deliverance to the special favor and interposition of Providence; and I need not repeat them now. You will, I am sure, agree with me in the feeling that they ought to excite within us mingled awe, astonishment, and thanksgiving. If as a people we ever forget to praise the God of our fathers for the manner in which he hurried to our rescue in this appalling crisis, our tongues should forever cleave to the roof of our mouths!

But it is not merely in reference to what he has done for the salvation of the republic, that the past year teaches us how real is God's government of the world. This whole civil convulsion, in all its aspects, proclaims, trumpet-tongued, the same truth; it does so, at least, to every thoughtful and devout observer.

You recollect the opening words of the famous French preacher at the funeral of the Grand Monarch, "God only is great!" In a similar strain we might well exclaim, as we recall the strange scenes of the vanishing year, and bid them a final adieu: "God alone rules among the inhabitants of the earth!" In the presence of such awful troubles and desolation—in the presence of such vast changes, coming home to the very bosoms and involving the dear-

est interests, the happiness and the national existence even of thirty millions of human beings—it seems a kind of impiety to recognize any hand but that which made the world. Some, I know, deem it an easy thing to show exactly how this storm arose; who and what were the agents in producing it; and how it might have been avoided. They can see in it nothing but the natural effects of obvious human causes. For myself, I can not assent at all to this view. It is only half the truth. Of course, I do not deny that this trouble has real and deep-seated human causes. It is no bare miracle, nor has it sprung up out of the dust. Never was there a great civil convulsion, whose historical grounds and motives were more distinctly traceable, or more worthy to be studied. But when we have gone as far in this direction as it is possible to go; when we have philosophized upon the matter to the extent of our ability, we shall still find ourselves confronted with difficulties whose only solution is the decree of Omnipotence. Both reason and religion will compel us to cry out with the psalmist: "Come, behold the works of the Lord! what desolations he hath made in the earth! He is terrible in his doings toward the children of men." If there be a chapter in American history crowded with providential events and judgments, it is certainly that which contains the records of 1861. The very insignificance of most of the human agents only serves to bring all the more clearly into the foreground of the tremendous scene that mysterious Power, which led the hosts of Israel through the wilderness, which stood by Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the burning fiery furnace, which St. John, in his vision of heaven, saw riding forth in righteousness to judge and to make war, ruling the nations with a rod of iron and treading the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God—that august Power before the breath of whose nostrils kings and statesmen and mighty men are as chaff driven by the whirlwind. The first great lesson, then, taught us by the events of the past year is the reality and beneficence of the divine government.

2. The next lesson which we have been learning from the same events, is the inestimable worth and sanctity of rightful human government. What loose and false notions used to prevail among us on this subject! How imperfectly we were imbued with the sentiment that civil society is a divine institution; that rulers are ordained of God for the terror of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well; and that they are responsible to him for the faithful performance of their duties! Not that we directly denied this truth; on the contrary, it was not unfrequently inculcated from both the pulpit and the press; but we had only the faintest conception of its fundamental position in the moral order of the world; we hardly dreamed of its immense practical meaning and importance. We had been in the habit of regarding

government so exclusively on its mere earthly side; of considering and treating it as the creature of our own will and of flattering ourselves for the skill with which we and our fathers had framed and carried it on; political power, too, had been so prostituted to evil purposes, so divorced from the nobler influences, intelligence, and character of the nation, that there was a natural repugnance to mixing up what seemed so utterly worldly, with the thought of God, and giving it the sanction of his authority. There is nothing more antagonistic to the sentiment of reverence than honest contempt; and this is the very feeling which had for years been growing stronger and more intense among the best portion of the American people towards mere politics and politicians. The two terms were fast becoming synonymous for whatever is most groveling, mercenary, and unprincipled in human conduct. How, under such circumstances, could government itself retain any deep hold upon the respect and veneration of the people? The effect was exactly analogous to that which follows in the sentiments of a community toward the Church, when religion and its professors become widely infected with formalism, low morals, and hypocrisy. At such a time it is of little use to talk about the Church as an institution of God; men are in no mood to receive the doctrine. They are rather disposed to wish there were no church in the world. And thus thousands of the most intelligent and virtuous people in this country had grown so heart-sick of the political degeneracy, meanness, and corruption of the times; so filled with indignant shame and disgust at the manner in which power was prostituted to selfish and wicked ends, that, instead of looking up to government as an ordinance of God, they were rather inclined to wish there were no such thing in existence to stimulate men's bad passions with its huge temptations!

But the experience of the past year has taught us new and more scriptural lessons on this subject. It has taught us that if there were no such thing as government in the world, human society would be changed into a hell upon earth. It has taught us that we can no more dispense with law, order, and civil authority than we can dispense with light and air and daily bread, in the sphere of our physical, or with property, marriage, and the family, in the sphere of our moral being. We have found out that God has placed us under government for the largest and most robust discipline of our nature; for developing in us the manliest virtues, loyalty, honor, fidelity, obedience, self-sacrificing courage, and public spirit; and that the proper way to show our discontent with its abuses is to labor with religious zeal for their correction, and to fulfill all the duties of a good citizen. We have, in a word, been taught deeper lessons respecting the true nature, the necessity, the just claims, and the boundless beneficence of rightful government.

during the past year than during all the previous three-score years of the century. And alas! for us, if we do not mark, learn, and inwardly digest them! What solemn lessons, too, have been given us respecting the real character and fruits of a government founded in lawlessness and treason! The grandest and best things are the most fearful when converted into instruments of unrighteousness. No sort of impiety equals that which comes of turning the grace of God into licentiousness. What form of social pollution is like that of an adulterous marriage? It was an "archangel ruined" who led on the rebel host of heaven. And so when the majesty of government is made the cloak and shield of unnatural rebellion, we have one of the most terrific spectacles ever witnessed among men. Such a monstrous spectacle has suddenly presented itself to the astonished gaze of heaven and earth, in the midst of this Christian land—in this second half of the nineteenth century. Mankind never looked upon one more strange or impressive. I firmly believe it is designed by divine wisdom to teach the unhappy people of the South and the whole nation lessons, which neither they nor their children after them will ever forget. When we emerge out of this dark night of trouble, as with God's blessing I believe we shall, it will be with such a sense and such memories of the power and benignity of rightful free government on the one hand, and of the cruelty and terrors of a lawless, tyrannical government on the other hand, as shall compensate, in no small degree, for all our sacrifices. We are a youthful people yet; and we shall still be assailed by gigantic temptations to break asunder those bands of righteous law and restraint which, with such pious wisdom, our fathers wrought into the whole framework of our national life, and which no people can long set at naught but at the risk of being dashed in pieces, like a potter's vessel. May it not prove to us, in times of future trial, a bulwark of moral strength that thus, in the early manhood of our career, we had borne the yoke and learned obedience by the things which we suffered?

3. Another weighty lesson, vividly taught us by the events of the past year, is the extreme weakness of good men, and their liability to be carried away by popular frenzy. I know of nothing connected with this great rebellion more unspeakably sad than the hearty approval it has received from thousands of the best men and women in the South—persons of unquestionable virtue, intelligence, and Christian principle. Instead of regarding it as a colossal crime, they profess to regard it as one of the holiest wars ever waged. No Crusader ever fought for the recovery of the holy sepulcher with a fiercer zeal than many of them have displayed in this assault upon the life of their country. And if we had lived in the South, who can say how few of us would not have followed their example? I do not allude to this subject

here for the purpose of uttering harsh words; I have no heart for that. The simple fact is painful and dreadful enough without angry comment; at least from the sacred desk. It is something to weep and wail over. May the Lord forgive them; for they surely know not what they do! And for ourselves, let us learn from this appalling instance what a poor protection mere personal virtue, intelligence or piety affords against a thoroughly demoralized and frenzied popular sentiment; how readily the most solemn oaths and obligations and opinions may be swept away when once the public reason is dethroned, and mad passions installed in its place; above all, what an unutterable curse it is for society to carry in its bosom and idolize as divine an institution, which, like slavery, is essentially at war with the first principles of Christian justice, humanity, and civilization. I am very far from thinking that good men at the South were any worse than good men at the North. But they breathed a social atmosphere, charged with perilous stuff; they had long eaten of an insane root; and it only needed the favoring circumstances to concentrate the poison, and plunge them in one common, universal delirium. Not with pharisaic pride, but with heartfelt grief, pity, and prayer let us contemplate their deplorable state, and thank God, not that we are better than they, but that our lot has fallen to us in higher latitudes and on freer soil. But it would be wrong to forget here that there have been bright exceptions to the general madness, which has swept over the revolted States. History does not record finer instances of patriotic fidelity and heroism than have tinged with a silver lining this black cloud of conspiracy and insurrection. Not a few have been found to whom Milton's beautiful description of the seraph Abdiel might be justly applied:

"Among innumerable false, unmoved,
Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified,
His loyalty he kept, his love, his zeal;
Nor number, nor example with him wrought
To swerve from truth, or change his constant mind,
Though single. From amidst them forth he passed,
Long way through hostile scora, which he sustained
Superior ———"

4. And this leads me to note another lesson written as with the point of a diamond upon the events of the past year; I mean the paramount claims of our country to our services, property, life, and every thing earthly that is ours. We had often felt the supremacy of these claims in reference to other times and former generations; and we had read with admiration and delight of the manner in which they were met by the noble army of patriots and martyrs to liberty from the Hebrew, Grecian, and Roman ages down through all the Christian centuries to our venerated sires. But we ourselves have lived in quiet, prosperous times, and it has

been only to a very limited extent that we have felt in our own persons the more severe pressure of public duty. As a consequence, it can not be denied, the patriotic sentiment had been greatly weakened and injured for want of discipline; private interests had assumed a dictatorial power; we were giving ourselves up, without let or hindrance, to the pursuits of gain, to the buying of pieces of land, of oxen, and of merchandise, and to the building of fine houses, and doing our own pleasure—in a word, to making money and to self-indulgence. I do not say that this was all, that no higher motives actuated our lives; but simply that the overwhelming tendency and temptation was to move along a very low plane of thought and action, to regard life as chiefly intended for our private use and profit. Was it not so? Did we not read and hear about deeds of heroic self-sacrifice and devotion to great principles very much as of a winter's evening, around his own fireside, one reads about shipwrecks and storms at sea? But the case is altogether different now. This year has initiated us into a higher love. It has taught us that next to God we belong to our country, and that at her bidding there is no sacrifice we ought not cheerfully to make—no toil we ought not to undergo—no danger, though it be to march to the cannon's mouth or stand in the imminent deadly breach, which we should shrink from facing; it has made us comprehend that almost all the things we had been used most to think of and to prize, are as nothing compared with her approval and benediction. How vividly conscious we now are, that in serving our country we are in the glorious service of justice, law, freedom, humanity, and religion! that in spending and being spent for her, we are helping forward the great cause of God, and treasuring up blessings for our posterity and for all mankind. Who can estimate the elevating and transforming influence of such thoughts as these, suddenly awakened as they have been during the past year, in the minds of millions whose existence before had been chiefly absorbed in mere material interests! what an education for the public spirit, the loyalty, and whole manhood of the nation! Certainly it is some compensation for the woful losses and suffering and horrors through which we are passing, that they serve as the providential occasion for developing in the heart of the American people that sublime consciousness of truth and duty which is at once the strength and the crowning grace of a free Christian state. Thousands of loyal citizens who began the year in health are now sleeping in a soldier's grave or pining in gloomy prisons and hospitals, or weeping the tears of widowhood and sharp bereavement; tens of thousands more who began it in wealth will end it in poverty; innumerable fortunes have been thrown overboard and sunk out of sight in this sea of trouble. It would be hard to estimate the grief, waste, loss, and destruction

of property, of business, and of solid schemes of life which have come upon the nation; and yet if we reckon wealth and prosperity as Heaven does, the country and the people are incomparably richer than they were twelve months ago. How much richer in patriotic confidence and affections, in devotion to the general good, in patience and virtuous self-control, in manly valor and unboastful self-reliance, in gratitude to the past, in hope and high resolve, in reverence for both law and liberty, and in the assured feeling that the God of our fathers is still our God and will be the God and guide of our children! This is a kind of wealth which, though coined out of hearts' blood, is more precious than rubies; there are no jewels which adorn the brow of a Christian people with such resplendent beauty.

The lessons of which I have spoken by no means exhaust the impressive teaching of this year of wonder. What new and terrible light it has poured in upon the hidden depths of American slavery! What amazing proofs it has given us of the power and resources of political crime, when once organized into a system, actuated by the spirit of a domineering social caste, backed by popular frenzy, and led on by a band of resolute, remorseless, and desperate conspirators! Only amidst the horrors of the first French Revolution does modern history offer a parallel. What light, too, do the events of this year cast on the disputed problems respecting the progress of Christian society, and the effect of that progress upon individual character and the old depraved passions of human nature! But important as these points are, I will not stop to dwell upon them now. Some of them, indeed, have been considered in previous sermons; and all of them are likely to acquire fresh interest and meaning as this fearful drama of Providence shall be more fully developed.

5. I pass, therefore, to a closing lesson, which brings the subject home directly to our own bosoms, and is a most fitting reflection for this last religious service of the year. It is the vanity of the individual man, except as he stands related to God and eternity. I spoke a moment ago of the paramount claims of our country and the general good over our private interests. But, after all, how insignificant is any one individual among thirty millions, is any single life in the great perennial life of the nation! It is like a single grain of sand upon the sea-shore; it is a fugitive wave among the infinite, multitudinous waves of the ocean! You and I are bound to give all we have to our country, and to die for her if need be. But how easily our country can dispense with your services or mine, with you and me! Our friends would miss us, and mark the spot and the hour when and where we vanished from sight; but the nation, busied and oppressed with its tremendous cares, would move on as if we had never existed. There may seem to be exceptions now and then, like

that of the illustrious soldier and patriot whose loyal solicitude has just hurried him back across the wintry Atlantic, and whose career has contributed so largely to shape that of our Union. But even these rare exceptions are so chiefly in appearance. It is the personal virtue and nobleness, which especially entwines such men's names with the history and fame of their country. If Washington had not been a man of consummate personal worth, would he ever have been so enshrined in our grateful love and veneration? Here, then, public and private duty are reconciled. We serve our country and the world best when we most diligently cherish those pure, generous and holy affections, those immortal virtues, which prepare us for a better country, that is, an heavenly—for the eternal fellowship of saints and angels, and for the presence of our God and Saviour. Thus is the ideal of a perfect Christian culture one with that which makes us good men and women, good citizens, and good in all the varied relations of our earthly life. Let us see to it, then, that first of all by prayer, repentance, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and a devout imitation of his sinless example, we perform aright our inalienable personal work. Let us allow nothing—no pressure of public care, no excitement of the times, no worldly attraction or interest—to seduce us for a moment from that inward, spiritual allegiance which we owe to the adorable Captain of our salvation.

Let us live in Christ and to Christ, and we shall then live most wisely for all about us. This is the best method of rendering ourselves useful and a blessing to our homes, our friends, our country, the church, and the whole world. This is the way to enjoy "central peace" amidst the endless agitations of temporal existence, and to secure a seat among the happy few

"Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air,
Sons of the morning——"

Thus standing at the post of duty, like faithful sentinels, we shall not be surprised or affrighted by the coming of the Son of Man, whether he come in the second or in the third watch. "Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself and make them sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them. And if he shall come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants."

SERMON IV.*

BY REV. GEORGE L. PRENTISS, D.D.,

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HOW TO MEET THE EVENTS OF 1862.

"UNTO the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies."—PSALM 112: 4, 7, 8.

I CALLED your attention on last Sunday afternoon to some of the providential lessons taught us by the extraordinary events of the past year. My present aim will be to show in what spirit we ought to look forward to the events of the new year, and how we should prepare ourselves to meet them; or, to express it in another way, let us consider what is the most Christian posture of mind towards the future at such a time as this.

The subject, I think, every one will admit, is eminently practical and seasonable. It comes home to the business and bosoms of us all. If we have any real faith in God, never was there a moment better fitted to test and to illustrate it. If there be a fundamental difference between the religious man and the worldling, now is the hour for letting it be seen. If Christ's Gospel, as in several recent discourses I have tried to show, is intended and able to transfigure our earthly life with sacred beauty, to give us comfort, uphold our fainting spirits, and brighten the darkest cloud of trouble with the bow of celestial promise, let it do so now. Never before had we such an occasion to put in practice all the noblest principles of our religion. Never before had we such an opportunity to do signal honor to our Lord and Master by the manner in which we represent him to the world. Never before were we summoned by so loud a voice from heaven to take unto us the whole armor of God, and quit us like true Christian men and women. If, in such a storm as this, we are found faithless and craven-hearted, it will only demonstrate how unworthy we are of the name we profess, and of the privileges we enjoy; it will only show that we deserve to be cast overboard as so many mere Jonahs and cumberers of the ship.

In what spirit, then, ought we to look forward to the events of 1862, and how should we be prepared to meet them when they come? If our blessed Lord himself, or one of his inspired apostles, should appear to answer this question for us, what would that answer be? We know what it would be; for in effect they did answer it

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eighteen hundred years ago. It is truly marvelous how much in our Lord's teaching, in that of his Apostles, and in the Old Testament, has reference to the manner in which great public troubles should be encountered; nor is there any thing in the Holy Scriptures that exhibits, in a light more impressive, the moral elevation, power, and magnanimity of the Christian spirit. It is not, however, in the teaching of the Bible alone that we get the right answers to the question I have asked; we have it answered practically a thousand times over in the whole history of the Church. How large a portion of that history is a record of suffering! If there is any thing that the Church ought to understand well, it is the Gospel art of meeting great tribulations—of facing every kind and degree of public and private calamity; for her experience has sounded their lowest depths. There is no wave and no billow which has not gone over her. It is hardly possible to conceive an exigency so momentous or so perplexing, that nothing analogous to it can be found in her annals. There were, no doubt, some events in the year just closed which form an altogether new chapter in the book of universal history; it could not be otherwise. Providence is not wont to copy itself. Its principles are always the same, because they are perfect and eternal; but its lessons, like spring-flowers, have an infinite variety and freshness. There is always something unique about them. They carry the race on to a higher point of view, and a more complete knowledge of the truth and ways of God. They shed new light upon the great problems of humanity and Christian society. They help to bring nearer the day when the reign of Divine Justice shall be fully inaugurated from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same. It will be so, we may rest assured, with the lessons and events of 1862. The events of 1862! How little we fore-know exactly what they will be; how they will affect our country and the world, or how they will affect us individually! Never before was the immediate future so utterly inscrutable. Changes which, not long ago, would have consumed half a century, now occur in a single year. Events move on with a rush like ice issuing in the spring from one of our Northern rivers. There is something in their magnitude, rapidity, and prodigious effects which baffles and defies all foresight. A thousand years used to be with the Lord as one day; now one day is almost as a thousand years. Never was the sagacity of men most profoundly versed in the knowledge of affairs, and of the past, so utterly at fault. Whether this is owing to material, social, or rather to specifically providential causes, or to all three combined, we need not stop to inquire; enough that the fact is indisputable. This new year is likely to be quite as eventful and exciting as the past. We can not tell what the course of things will be; but be it what it may, we know it must be one of incalculable importance. It will, perhaps,

decide the fate of our country; nor would it be very strange if the destinies of several other countries should be virtually fixed this year. One has only to glance at the colossal forces arrayed against each other in mortal struggle; one has only to consider what interests, what principles, and what opinions are also arrayed against each other, all striving for the mastery; one has only to reflect that peace and readjustment are now impossible, except through a great victory, or a great defeat, and the understanding of a child can perceive that we are drawing near to events, the fame of which will "roll sounding onward through a thousand years."

And now, I ask again, in what spirit does it become a Christian man to look forward to and meet them?

1. In the spirit of devout filial trust in God. This is the first and best thing. Nothing else can supply its place. Prayer and faith put the soul at once in the right temper for meeting whatever is coming to pass. They connect the events by anticipation with that Almighty Power without which not a sparrow falleth to the ground. God will govern the world this new year, from beginning to end, just as wisely and effectually as he governed in the past; and who of us can refuse him the tribute of our grateful praise and adoration for the manner in which he governed it last year. Who is disposed to charge him with having made any mistake? He will commit no mistake in 1862. He will allow no one to thwart or circumvent his plan. That plan is already formed, even to the minutest detail; it includes all the events of the year up to its dying second; many of them will be strange and unexpected to us, but not one of them will be so to God. There is not a shadow of doubt, not a shadow of reason to doubt that he will manage the affairs of our country, during the next twelve months, with infinite skill. There will be a great deal of bad management on the part of men, as there has been in the past; but out of these very errors the divine skill is sure to elicit some ultimate advantage. If there should be no human mismanagement; if every thing should be done exactly as we might wish, or think best, it would be something unheard of in the history of the world.

Now, if this be a true statement of the Christian doctrine of providence—and I ask you, if it is not?—if, moreover, that doctrine is no barren theological dogma, no pious illusion, no mere theme for the pulpit, but the most fruitful and substantial fact in the sphere of human affairs, then, what a sublime resting-place it affords to our anxious thoughts, as we listen to the roaring of the waves, and try to peer out into the midnight darkness that enshrouds the future! We have heard, during the past year, a great deal about the masterly strategy of our generals, and the triumphs which in a little while were sure to crown it. But expe-

rience has already taught us that this is no certain reliance, and that able combinations may be formed on the other side. It is eternal Providence alone whose combinations are unerring and always successful; for God sees the end from the beginning, and can cause the victory of enemies and the discomfiture of friends alike to further his own designs. If any one is afflicted with a feeble impression of this truth, let him read through his Bible again, and see how from the book of Genesis to the book of the Revelation it shows God's sovereign hand in the world. That ruling hand is strong and skillful as in the beginning. It is as busy in our affairs to-day as it was in the affairs of the chosen people at any moment in their history; it is as busy in our affairs to-day as it was in any events described in the Apocalypse; as it was in the blessed Reformation of the sixteenth century; in the civil wars of England; or in our own struggle for national independence. How absurd to believe that God notes the fall of a sparrow, and yet takes no part in a contest which shakes the world, and involves the most vital interests of Christian civilization! Rest assured, he not only takes part in it, but the chief part. Rest assured, the struggle is his; and intended to secure his ends. This is not denying the proper freedom of the human agents, nor the reality of the human causes; it is merely asserting that above all these, and running through all these, is a Providential cause and agency to which they are subordinate, and which is the true key of the moral situation. Such is the simple teaching of religious faith. Let us endeavor to practice it to the full. While others are floundering in the bog of endless conjecture and worldly calculation, or tossed to and fro in the whirlpool of excited popular opinion, let us stand firmly upon this Rock of Ages, lifting up our heads in the strength of filial trust and prayer. It is always folly to try to walk through this world by sight only; it is madness to do so now. If we would not be confounded nor put to shame; if we would look the future in the face without dismay, we must learn to keep step to the music of Providence, and say continually in our hearts: Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

2. Armed with such a joyous and devout trust in God, it will not be difficult for us to exercise in all things a spirit of Christian patience and moderation; and that is the next point. I am aiming to show how we may most honor our religion by the manner in which we demean ourselves in a time of public calamity; and I have said that the first requisite is to put ourselves in direct communion with God, reverently intrusting our cause to him, and leaning upon his arm. This is a posture of the human mind than which nothing nobler can be conceived of. But it is not easy to attain it: a bare wish, a volition, a sermon will not make it ours. It has severe conditions, like all eminently good things; and one of these conditions is a spirit of Christian patience

and moderation. You can not rest in God without a corresponding equipoise and rest in yourself. A state of reasonless excitement and passion is utterly hostile to prayer and religious trust. It needs only a slight acquaintance with our mental constitution to see—what is indeed evident from daily observation—that lawless passion, in all its forms, and whether it express itself in word or deed, discomposes and enfeebles the soul. It is, for the time being, a dethronement of reason, converting the wise man into a fool, and the bad man into a maniac. It casts a cloud over whatever is fair, generous and strong in human character. If it once gets possession of a whole people, its effects are like a conflagration. Nothing that stands in its devouring path is sacred any more. The solemn temples, the halls of justice, the venerable monuments of other times, the galleries of art, the sanctuaries of misfortune and distress, and the homes of the people—all turn to ashes before it. It is indeed a fearful thing, and we can not guard against it with too much vigilance. Many seem to feel as if the exciting times justified almost any amount of impatient and furious emotion. But that is certainly a strange mode of reasoning; it is as if one should argue in favor of the freest use of strong drink, because there was an extraordinary prevalence of intemperance; or, as if one should think it a good time to set all sail, because a hurricane was blowing. No doubt, the exciting times supply inexhaustible fuel for the stormy passions of our nature; they render it exceedingly difficult for the wisest man to keep his balance; but is that any good reason why he should not keep his balance? Because the temptations to cutting loose from the safe anchorage-ground of Christian principle are overwhelming, should we, therefore, deem it a light matter to cut loose and be driven forth, rudderless, upon the wild, tempestuous waves? No, my brethren; that would be a very childish course, dishonorable equally to our manhood and to our piety. Exciting and perilous times are the ones, of all others, for the exercise of the most heroic and religious qualities; they are the times appointed for the highest triumph of Christian fortitude, calmness and self-control; they loudly call for and presage general ruin unless they find silent, thoughtful, self-poised and lion-hearted men, who loathe boastful noise and bluster, who fear God, and will not swerve from the path of justice, duty and honor, though a million of voices clamored never so fiercely for them to do so. It is always easy to give way to the petty, selfish and malignant passions; at such a time as this it is easier than to think or speak. There is nobody so bad or so foolish that he can not do it; and there is nobody so wise and good that he is not in constant danger of doing it. Of course, I am not arguing against strong feeling, nor censuring or deprecating its reasonable expression. No one, it seems to me, can now feel right without feeling deeply. Indifference, while such issues are

pending, is a sort of moral treason, and I pity the man who is cursed with it. But there is a world of difference between profound and boisterous, unbridled or rancorous feeling. Our rightful emotions can not be too profound; but they may be readily vitiated and wasted in fretful talk, clamor and empty rage. They may get extravagant and lawless. We ought to husband them with religious care; we should aim to concentrate them upon the best objects, and to elevate them into deliberate convictions and principles of action. Without them there is indeed nothing truly generous and grand in human character; we can not be thoroughly and effectively in earnest if not impassioned. But Christian passion is not that of gall and wormwood; it is the wise inspiration of love, and pays dutiful homage to truth and justice. When roused to the utmost pitch of righteous indignation, it still remembers the saying that is written: "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Nothing, in fine, is more beautiful in times of general distress and agitation; nothing indicates more plainly a soul planted above the turmoil of the hour and in close alliance with heaven; nothing is surer to exert a soothing, benign influence than the gentle spirit of Gospel patience and moderation:

"A sweet, revengeless, quiet mind,
And to one's greatest haters kind."

As a people, we are taking lessons on this subject, which ought to make us wiser. We have witnessed, during the past year, the frightful and barbarizing effects of unrestrained passion, on a scale unknown before on this continent; and our ears have recently been stunned by loud reports of the same explosive mischief from beyond the ocean. We have seen the public sentiment of the first Christian nation in the Old World completely frenzied by sudden rage, and, casting all patience and moderation to the winds, pour itself forth in a torrent of vindictive menace and vituperation; and that, too, against a kindred Christian people, perplexed in the extreme, and agonizing in a desperate struggle for their very existence. Were not such a fancy precluded by the practiced literary skill and unmistakable Anglican manner of the assault, one might easily imagine that the cunning emissaries of the great pro-slavery rebellion itself had all at once been installed in the responsible editorial office of guiding the public opinion of the British nation, already so prejudiced and misled by their stealthy machinations. What a comment upon Christian civilization in the second half of the nineteenth century! What a fine illustration of the boasted progress of society! I do not forget that this tempest of wrathful abuse and threatening was met on the spot by generous, brave words of Christian rebuke and moderation; we may feel quite certain it found no echo in the heart of England's most excellent and beloved, but now, alas!

widowed Queen, as we are assured it did not in that of her deeply lamented consort. Neither do I forget to what an extent it was raised, by the artful appeals and misrepresentation of an unscrupulous press. But after taking all these things into account, it still remains an exceedingly painful and disheartening spectacle. Nor have we ourselves always been guiltless of similar violence. But let us hope that a better day is dawning. The dignified and considerate demeanor of the American people under the recent severe trial of their temper, is highly auspicious, and seems to me a fit matter for devout thanksgiving. They would not have met such a provocation two years ago with the same calmness. It will be no light reward for all our present sufferings if, exorcising the aggressive, unclean spirit of national pride and self-conceit, they teach us to understand that the real glory of a Christian people, as of a Christian man, is to be just, patient, and reasonable, as well as strong.

3. But I hasten to note another thing that ought to mark the spirit with which we go forward into the new year. It is a courageous willingness to make any and every sacrifice to which our country may call us. The year opens with many favorable omens. As we look back and recall the beginning of 1861, it seems as if a mountain had been lifted from the heart of the country. Then we were in horrible fear lest the Lord God of our fathers had abandoned us; lest the ancient ancestral glory which, from the day it was set up, had filled our political tabernacle, was about to depart, and our life as a people was to be extinguished in an abyss of national idiocy, cowardice, and shame. That hideous dread God has been pleased mercifully to remove from us. He has breathed upon the hearts of the people, and summoned them to arise and shake themselves from the dust of their selfish interests and old vices—to put on their beautiful garments, and array themselves for both the battle and the altar of burnt-offering. Nor have they been disobedient to the summons. Never in our day did they stand on so high a moral vantage-ground; never, I firmly believe it, were they in closer alliance with eternal justice, or more ready to do its bidding, than they are now. But a vast work is yet to be done; a work of whose magnitude the most of us have only the faintest conception, and which no man can adequately comprehend; a work requiring consummate wisdom, fortitude, valor, energy, perseverance, loyal self-devotion, and faith in God; a work worthy to have tasked any generation of good citizens, soldiers, and statesmen that ever walked the earth. And if Moses, David, Nehemiah, Daniel, and the most renowned patriots of Greece and Rome—if King Alfred and Washington were before me, I would still say so! This is clear as daylight, take what theoretical view you please of the past, the present, or the future. If victory should henceforth perch upon the national

standard on every battle-field; if peace should hasten to come back and spread her white wings over the whole reunited republic, even then it would be so. We can not be too deeply impressed with this truth; especially should it be engraven, as with the point of a diamond, upon the consciences of our public men, our President and his Cabinet, our Senators and Representatives, the leaders of our army and navy, and all others, of whatever calling, who occupy places of influence and authority in the land. That man is not fit—that man is utterly unworthy to have a voice in the national councils, or to direct the national forces, or to guide the popular opinion at this awful moment, who does not see and is not greatly sobered by the thought that he is not living in ordinary times, nor fulfilling ordinary functions, but that, by the appointment of Almighty Providence, he is transacting business for unborn generations and for the human race. If, instead of this, he is merely looking out for some plank which he may appropriate from the wreck of the public prosperity; if his chief thought is how to make money out of the distresses of the nation, or how to further his petty, selfish political ends, then, I say, he is a traitor to God and his country, and, if he does not repent, will doubtless at the day of judgment, if not sooner, receive a traitor's doom. All our ends now should be for God, our country, and mankind. What are we individually, and what are all our earthly interests—what is any man in the land, I care not how high he stands—and what are his individual interests, that we should stop to weigh them or ourselves in the balance against such public claims as now press upon us? Let us, then, face this new year and its unknown events armed with a courageous willingness to perform any service and make any sacrifice for the sake of helping on the good cause. It is not impossible that foreign war may be added to our intestine strife. If so, let us pray that it may be thrust upon us wrongfully; and then, conscious of right, we may calmly, reverently, without boasting, yet without dismay, join issue with a world in arms. Then the stars in their courses will fight for us, as they fought against Sisera. Friends innumerable will spring up throughout Christendom, and even in heathen lands. Above all, the Lord of hosts will be with us, and will take part on our side. This, my brethren, is the way to peace in calamitous times: an unflinching loyalty to duty and to God. This will keep any man from

"Starting and turning pale
At Rumor's angry din;
No storm can then assail
The charm he wears within:
Rejoicing still, and doing good,
And with the thought of God imbued."

4. The subject is so important and fruitful—it is so emphatically a life-question for us all, that we might well spend many hours in

considering it. But I will detain you with only one further remark. Let us enter upon the new year in the full assurance of hope; that is the natural conclusion of all I have been saying, and it is, moreover, our Christian birthright. Let us not hang down our heads like bulrushes, but lift them up, as our Lord bids us, assured that, amidst all these troubles, our redemption is drawing nigh.

Though weak, and tossed, and ill at ease,
Amid the roar of smiting seas
And ship's convulsive roll,

let us still keep our eye fixed steadfastly upon the eternal Polestar, and our souls staid upon the promise and oath of our Almighty Leader. Then in due time shall our light break forth as the morning, and our darkness become as noonday. Let us not be afraid of evil tidings. The future of the republic extends beyond a year, and will be long enough, let us not doubt, for the complete triumph of law, justice, freedom, humanity, and Christian truth. Wherefore, my brethren, be strong, and rejoice always in the Lord and in the power of his might; for surely the wrath of man shall praise him, the remainder of wrath shall he restrain. Pray without ceasing. Let patience have her perfect work. Let your moderation be known unto all men.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work. AMEN.

REV. GEORGE L. PRENTISS, D.D.:

NEW-YORK, January 8, 1862.

DEAR SIR: We respectfully ask, for publication, copies of the two sermons on "The Lessons of 1861," and "The Events of 1862." The times urgently demand the employment of every influence calculated to inspire the public confidence, allay impatience under existing evils, and to excite a proper spirit to meet the dangers and difficulties which impend over the country. The sermons in question seem to us so well designed to effect these results, that we wish to extend their influence beyond the congregation to which they were addressed. Hoping for a favorable answer to our request, we are, dear sir,

Yours very truly and respectfully,

WM. E. DODGE,
GEO. B. DE FOREST,
HERMON GRIFFIN,
D. D. LORD,

LEGRAND B. CANNON,
R. H. MCCURDY,
HENRY B. SMITH.

NEW-YORK, January 9, 1862.

GENTLEMEN: The sermons, of which you request copies for the press, were written in haste and without any thought of publication. But if you deem them fitted to further in the least the righteous cause, they are entirely at your service.

Believe me most truly yours,

GEORGE L. PRENTISS.

Messrs. WM. E. DODGE,
GEO. B. DE FOREST,
HERMON GRIFFIN,
D. D. LORD,

LEGRAND B. CANNON,
R. H. MCCURDY,
HENRY B. SMITH.

THE PRAYER-MEETING.

For The Prayer-Meeting.

A Catechism on Prayer-Meetings.

QUESTION. What is a prayer-meeting?

ANSWER. An assembly where Christians meet for prayer, and are met by their Saviour. (Matt. 18 : 20.)

Q. How shall prayer-meetings be made interesting?

A. By keeping our hearts at all times in a devout and spiritual frame.

Q. How are prayer-meetings often spoiled?

A. By going to them with a cold heart.

Q. How may those who lead in prayer, pray to the edification of the people?

A. By being direct, earnest, fervent, *short*. All prayers recorded in Scripture are *brief*, and generally for *particular* rather than for *general* objects.

Q. What are "vain repetitions"?

A. To go over the same ground in the same prayer repeatedly, by circumlocution; or by repeating, with every breath, the name of the Supreme Being. Some persons will begin every sentence with, "O our heavenly Father!" whereas in the Lord's Prayer it is introduced once only, at the beginning. Vain repetitions are wearisome and painful to the hearer and unacceptable to God. (Matt. 6 : 7.)

Q. What should be most prominent in our prayers?

A. In the Lord's Prayer there are three petitions for the glory of God, and the coming of his kingdom, before any for ourselves. But men often reverse this, and make a long prayer for themselves, and then put in a single petition, at the close, for Christ's kingdom.

Q. Should the Scriptures always be read in prayer-meetings?

A. Yes; for we need not only to speak to God, but to hear God speaking to us.

Q. What is the greatest defect in social prayer?

A. Formality.

Q. How is formality induced?

A. 1. By cold or languid affections. 2. By always running the same round in our prayers.

Q. How may formality be corrected?

A. 1. By keeping our spiritual affections lively and active. 2. By getting out of the *rut*.

Q. How may we hinder the devotions of others?

A. By using low, uncouth, or ungrammatical expressions, misquoting Scriptures, etc., or by a wandering, tedious, dull or languid manner.

Q. How are these things to be corrected?

A. By studying propriety of expression; by a lively sense of our wants, and by stopping when

we have expressed all that we really feel.

Q. What should be the character of *exhortations* in a prayer-meeting?

A. Direct, confined to a single point, and *short*. It is better to hear a few words from many, than many words from a few.

Q. How long should a prayer-meeting be?

A. Never so long as to weary the people; for "where weariness begins, devotion ends." The Fulton-street meeting, which has excited so much interest, is limited to one hour.

Q. Is it the duty of every Christian to attend the prayer-meetings of the church to which he belongs, whenever it is in his power?

A. If not every one's duty, whose duty is it? The professor who does not regard it as a privilege to attend the prayer-meeting, has reason to question his own good estate.

Q. Ought unconverted persons to attend prayer-meetings?

A. If they desire God's blessing, where can they find a better place to seek it?

Q. What is predicted of God's people concerning prayer?

A. Zech. 8 : 20, 21; 12 : 10.

The Four Circles.

IMAGERY, when graphic and appropriate, often flashes impressive truth into the mind and heart, even as the burnished mirror when it reflects dazzling light from the face of the sun. The sainted Payson once used the following imagery, as a kind of spi-

ritual chariot to convey his meaning to the hearts of his hearers:

"Suppose professors to be ranged in different concentric circles around Christ. Some value the presence of their Saviour so highly, that they can not bear to be at any remove from him. Even their work they will bring up and do in the light of his countenance; and while engaged in it, will be seen constantly raising their eye to him, as if fearful of losing one beam of his light.

SECOND CIRCLE.

"Others, who to be sure would not be content to live out of his presence, are yet less absorbed by it than these; and may be seen a little further off engaged here and there in their various callings, their eyes generally on their work, but often looking up for the light which they love. Who among you, brethren, are in the second circle?

THIRD CIRCLE.

"A third class beyond these, but yet within the life-giving rays, includes a doubtful multitude, many of whom are so much engaged in their worldly schemes, that they may be seen standing sideways to Christ, looking mostly the other way, and only now and then turning their faces toward the light. The question arises: Am I in the third circle?

THE FOURTH CIRCLE.

"And yet farther out, among the last scattered rays, so distant that it is often doubtful whether they come at all within their influence, is a mixed assemblage of

busy ones, some with their backs wholly turned upon the Sun, and most of them so careful and troubled about their many things, as to spare but little time for their Saviour."

Christ an Interceder.

How very different are Christ's prayers for us, from any thing which we can do for one another! He can always aid us. We can not always do it. Let me try to show you the difference.

Many years ago there were some men in the State of P. who would not obey the laws of their country, but tried to destroy the laws, and have their own wills. When men go so far as to unite and say they will not obey the laws, this crime is called "high treason." Among these men who did so, was one by the name of J. F. He was carefully tried by the court, and found guilty and sentenced to be hung. The death-warrant was signed by the President of the United States, and the day was fixed on which he should die. But just before the day came, some people went to the President and asked him to permit a woman to see him who had something to say to him. The President said he would see her. A few kind friends went with her to the house of the President. The President stood up to receive her. But what was his surprise to see this woman with ten children all kneeling before him in tears! They were the wife and the ten children of J. F., kneeling and weeping, and interceding for the life of their father,

who was condemned to die! The President stood in amazement, and then the big tears came gushing down his cheeks, and his voice was so choked that he could not speak. With his eyes streaming with tears, and his hands raised toward heaven, he pushed a way out of the room. Oh! what a moment of anxiety. Would he hear the petition, or would he let the man die? In a few moments he returned with a paper in his hand. It contained a full and free pardon for her husband, and their father. He gave it to Mrs. F., and she went away, and returned joyful to her home, having her husband with her.

This was interceding before a human being; Christ intercedes before God. This was interceding for one man; Christ does it for all his people. This was for one short life; Christ asks for us eternal life. This was for one sin; Christ intercedes for all our sins. This was for a friend; Christ does it for those who had been enemies. This saved from the curse pronounced by human laws; Christ saves us from the curse of God's law. This was a little stream; but Christ carries us over the dark river of death.

Suppose one of these children were condemned to die, and were shut up in prison, and were going to send a petition to the governor for your life—whom would you wish to carry it? The most worthy man in the whole town, certainly. Christ is the most worthy being in the universe, and therefore he is a good intercessor. If you were to petition

for your life, whom would you wish to carry your petition—a stranger, or some warm, intimate friend of the governor? The friend surely. You would say, the governor will be more likely to hear his friend than a stranger. Yes; and God is ever well-pleased with his dear Son, and is willing to hear him when he intercedes for us.

History informs us of a man who was doomed to die for some crime which he had committed. His brother had lost an arm in defending his country. He came forward and held up the stump of his lost arm and interceded for his brother. The judges were so affected by the remembrance of his past services, that they freely pardoned the guilty brother for his sake. Thus is Christ described to us as sitting on the throne, with his wounds yet bleeding, (Rev. 5 : 6,) and interceding for us.

Christ.

MEN have no saving views of God, but in Christ; and God has no gracious view of men, but in Christ.

The Son of God, bearing the punishment of sin in our nature, tells us what is the enormity of sin, more than can be told by the torments of wicked men and fallen angels through all eternity.

Seek to be pardoned through Christ; but, above all, seek to be beloved of Christ.

There is no honor like a relation to Christ; no riches like the grace of Christ; no learning like the knowledge of Christ; and

there are no companions like the friends of Christ.

All our hope, as to freedom from guilt and ruin, and as to acceptance with God, is in Christ. Where can we obtain pardon and peace but in him? Through him alone, we receive all, from the least drop of water to the immense riches of eternal glory!

What should a sinner do, but go to Christ? What can become of a sinner, if Christ do not receive him?

The love of Christ is a vast ocean, that can not be fathomed, and is without a shore.

When conviction opens the eyes of the natural man, the first object he sees is Christ on the cross, dying for him.

The Wonders of Prayer.

THE Bible abounds in great historic facts, which strikingly illustrate the nature and the power of prayer, when addressed in strong faith to God, whose arm wields, at will, the resources of the universe, to accomplish his designs, and answer the requests of his people.

We quote the following from an eminent writer, richly suggestive of topics enough for twenty discourses, and ample food for private Christian meditation for many hours:

"Abraham's servant prays—Rebekah appears. Jacob wrestles, and prays, and prevails with Christ. Esau's mind is wonderfully turned from the revengeful purpose he had harbored for twenty years. Moses cries to God—the sea divides. Moses prays—Amalek is discomfited. Joshua prays—Achan is discovered. Hannah prays—

Samuel is born. David prays—Aithophel hangs himself. Asa prays—a victory is gained. Jehoshaphat cries to God—God turns away his foes. Isaiah and Hezekiah pray—185,000 Assyrians are dead in twelve hours. Daniel prays—the dream is revealed. Daniel prays—the lions are muzzled. Daniel prays—the seventy weeks are revealed. Mordecai and Esther fast—Haman is hanged on his own gallows in three days. Ezra prays at Ahava—God answers. Nehemiah darts a prayer—the King's heart is softened in a minute. Elijah prays—a drought of three years succeeds. Elijah prays—rain descends apace. Elisha prays—Jordan is divided. Elisha prays—a child's soul comes back; for prayer reaches eternity. The Church prays ardently—Peter is delivered by an angel."

Strange Questionings.

DR. LEASK, in his new work, *Happy Years at Hand*, just published in London, asks: "What does God intend to do with this world—this great, beautiful, and populous world, the scene of so many miseries, so many mighty acts, so many divine miracles, and so many and such long-continued struggles between the powers of good and evil? Shall it be converted? If so, by what instrumentality, and when? and that 'when?' has come back from every idol temple and lofty mountain in a long and sickly echo. And again the dreary 'when?' has gone up to heaven from the prayer-meeting, falling doubtfully from the preacher's lips, rolled heavily in the large missionary meeting, and passed around the globe like a desolate thing seeking a resting-place, and finding none. Or does God intend suddenly to destroy the

works of his hands, to set fire to the earth, and sweep it to destruction, just at the time when multitudes were beginning to hope that signs of better days were budding forth to gladden the eyes of the nations? Shall the earth—Adam's earth, man's earth, Christ's earth—speedily be seen by startled angels flying in its orbit through the heavens, one vast globe of intensely heated fire, like a steamship in flames rushing madly through the hissing sea?"

Historic Prayer

A COPY of the following remarkable prayer, preserved by a descendant of Col. Talmage, of revolutionary memory, who was present on the occasion, was recently obtained and read on a public occasion, at a meeting of the Sons of Connecticut:

"In the year 1781, a squadron of cavalry passed a Sabbath in Litchfield, Ct., and attended public worship in the meeting-house, when Rev. Judah Champion, the pastor, made the following prayer:

"O Lord! we view with terror and dismay the approach of the enemies of thy holy religion. Wilt thou send storm and tempest to toss them upon the sea, and to overwhelm them in the mighty deep, or scatter them to the uttermost parts of the earth? But, peradventure, should any escape thy vengeance, collect them together again, O Lord! as in the hollow of thy hand, and let thy lightnings play upon them. We beseech thee, moreover, that thou do gird up the

loins of these thy servants, who are going forth to fight thy battles. Make them strong men, that 'one shall chase a thousand, and two shall put ten thousand to flight.' Hold before them the shield with which thou wast wont in the old time to protect thy chosen people. Give them swift feet, that they may pursue their enemies; and swords, terrible as that of thy destroying angel, that they may cleave them down when they have overtaken them. Preserve these servants of thine, Almighty God! and bring them once more to their homes and friends, if thou canst do it consistently with thine high purposes. If, on the other hand, thou hast decreed that they shall die in battle, let thy spirit be present with them and breathe upon them, that they may go up as a sweet sacrifice into the courts of thy temple, where are habitations prepared for them from the foundations of the world."

Fire Low.

IN addressing the multitude, we must remember to follow the advice that Cromwell gave his soldiers: "Fire low." If our eloquence be directed above the heads of our hearers, we shall do no execution. By pointing our arguments low, we stand a chance of hitting their hearts, as well as their heads. In addressing angels, we could hardly raise our eloquence too high; but we must remember that men are not angels. Would we warm them by our eloquence, unlike Mohammed's mountain, it must come

down to them, since they can not raise themselves to it. It must come home to their wants and to their wishes, to their hopes and their fears, to their families and their firesides. The moon gives a far greater light than all the fixed stars put together, although she is much smaller than any of them; the reason is, that the stars are superior and remote, but the moon is inferior and contiguous.

Some of our Brethren.

THERE are times in the history of every church, and in the lifetime of church prayer-meetings—for prayer-meetings have a recorded history on high, if not below—when a few words timely and kindly uttered, will be like apples of gold in pictures of silver.

Suppose a pastor should say, in kindly and tearful tones, when facts seem to call for such an expression: "Your presence, brethren, at the prayer-meeting is encouraging." But is not the prayer-room too often neglected? And are there not many spurious excuses offered to palliate this neglect? Some of our brethren who possess talents of a high character, which might be used to great advantage in the prayer-meeting, are bound in the napkin, and if not buried in the earth, are laid aside but for a little better purpose. This is what disheartens the minister of Christ. He has, perhaps, been instrumental in your conversion; presented to you in behalf of the Church the right hand of fellowship; recorded your names in the records, and fondly congratulated himself on the noble accession to

the cause of Christ. He knows, and God knows, that you have talents too valuable to be lost. But, alas! he is disappointed. He goes to the prayer-room, and to his surprise, finds you absent. Marvel not at his depression of spirits. He must mourn, when so few come to Zion's solemn feast. By this neglect of the prayer-meeting you give decided evidence of your indifference to the cause of God, the prosperity of the Church, the salvation of souls, and personal piety.

Sabbath-School Children.

AT an anniversary-meeting of the London Sunday-school Union, the Rev. S. Kilpin remarked, that in catechising some children on the subject, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven," the following are the questions and answers:

What is to be done?

The will of God.

Where is it to be done?

On earth.

How is it to be done?

As it is in heaven.

How do you think the angels do the will of God in heaven, as they are our pattern?

The first replied:

"They do it immediately."

The second:

"They do it actively."

The third:

"They do it unitedly."

Here a pause ensued, and no other child appeared to have any answer; but after some time a little girl rose and said:

"Why, sir, they do it without asking any questions."

Prayer.

PRAYER is not the labored, loaded, complimentary address to the Deity generally dignified with the title of adoration. Of all the definitions of prayer none ever struck us like the one given by an Irish divine: "Prayer," said he, in his usual abrupt and sententious style, "is a sense of want seeking relief."

Prayer is This.

To look into the Bible and see what God has promised; to look into our hearts and ask ourselves what we want; and then, for Christ's sake, ask and expect the promise to be fulfilled.

Paul had three wishes, and they were all about Christ: that he might be found in Christ, that he might be with Christ, and that he might magnify Christ.

"Leaps the Live Thunder."

I LOVE living thoughts; one thought that awakens interest and leaves an impression on the mind, is of more practical value to me, than twenty thoughts of greater weight, if they fail to make a distinct and abiding impression. To secure such an impression, the thought must be good and the mode of expression must be perspicuous.

Moreover, the thought must be either peculiarly weighty, or original, or possess a happy adaptation, or be couched in a peculiar vocabulary, or dressed in a style which shall be to it as a robe, "white and glittering," or it must be communicated in tones that thrill and melt the soul.

"You can not print thunder," said a minister of the Gospel to me, when solicited to give his sermon to the press. "I know it," sir; "yet I can not hear some strains that fall upon my ear from the pulpit, without feeling a strong desire to communicate the impression to others." My pastor once remarked, that "one important thought, issued afresh, like a coinage in full weight, duly assayed, and with a sharp image, and resplendent surface, would redeem all the defects of even a poor sermon."

What is Prayer?

PRAYER is not a rapture, a rhapsody, a flight into the third heaven. It is not the proud ascent of the imagination into some high region of splendors and sublime abstractions. It is not necessarily the ecstasy of the soul overwhelmed with a rushing tide of irresistible emotions. It is a simple, every-day business. It is simply communing with God—communings with him, not in heaven among the seraphim, not in some mid region of the air, remote from the range of human business and trials and burdens, but here on earth, just where we need his grace and help. In order to this communion, God does not call us up to himself; he comes down to us—down to the level of our infirmity. Thus he makes prayer a simple thing, as simple as the expression of a child's desires, whispered into the ear of a kind father. If you would see what prayer is, or rather what it ought to be, study

the Lord's prayer, that model of Christian devotion. How little do you see there of sublime imagination! how little of enraptured sensibility! how little of intellectual abstraction and effort! how much of a common-sense plainness, and a childlike simplicity, in matter and in manner! After this manner, therefore, pray ye.

What is not Prayer.

MUCH that has the appearance and the name of prayer is not prayer, in the proper application of that word. There is no such thing as genuine prayer which is offered without a belief in God, as the hearer of prayer. There is no genuine prayer which is not offered under the power of an expectation that it will take effect on the mind and counsels of God. Prayer that is uttered mechanically, and as a mere ceremony, for decency's sake, is not prayer. Prayer that is poured forth merely for the sake of an expected reaction, or an accompanying excitement on the mind of the worshiper, is not prayer. In like manner, the prayer that is pronounced with a leading view to produce an effect on the mind of an audience, is not prayer. Whatever may be the design of him who leads a congregation, or a family, or a little praying-circle, in their professed addresses to God, whether it be to argue them indirectly into a certain opinion, or to kindle them into a certain excitement—whatever design he may have, other than to lead the minds of that assembly to God,

and to give form and utterance to their desires, in all simplicity and humility—so far as that design influences him, his prayer is not prayer. So if the congregation merely *hear* the prayer which is offered in their name; if they hear it only to sit in judgment on its diction, its tones, its spirit, and power; if they hear it only to surrender themselves to the flow of delighted sensibility, awakened by the voice, the imagery, the fervor of the speaker, it may be prayer on the part of him who gives it utterance, but it is not their prayer; it is not united prayer; the listeners are not praying.

This—need we say it distinctly?—accounts for the inefficacy of many prayers, not only such as are cold and lifeless, but such as have much glow of feeling, and much power of solitary or social excitement. There may be feeling where there is no faith. There may be excitement in the prayer-meeting or in the closet, where there is no humble, simple-hearted supplication. How often is this illustrated in the history of a revival of religion! The commencement and progress of such a work in a congregation, is characterized by nothing, perhaps, so much as by a tenderness and directness of faith, and a simplicity of aim, in the prayers of the church, for their unconverted children, friends, and neighbors. The minds of those who pray are filled only with the object and the subject of their supplications. They pray, because they believe the unconverted must perish, unless God

interpose to save them, and because they confidently hope that God will interpose at their request. Theirs is the energetic prayer that prevails with God. How happy are such worshipers! how sweet the fervor of such prayers! The worshipers are happy, without thinking of it; happy, because their minds are fully occupied with subjects worthy to fill their spiritual and immortal faculties. There is a sweetness in those prayers, which is nothing else than the sweetness of a humble and childlike communion with the Father of spirits.

Silence in Heaven !

THERE was silence in heaven. Cherubim and seraphim were astonished at the baseness of man. They felt, too, that they were the workmanship of God, and that he required all their services. Hence they knew they could do nothing toward atoning for human guilt. They spake not.

Then saith the Father: "Man must perish. Go, Justice, take thy sword, and let him feel the consequence of disobedience."

Here spake the Son: "Spare him, Father, spare him; I have found a ransom. I will take his place; I will bear thy wrath; I will die for him. Let him live."

Joy beamed in every countenance. "Go, my Son," said the Father. "Thou art my only, my beloved Son; but the time of thy humiliation is short, and I shall again receive thee to my bosom. Go."

In the fullness of time the Son of God came into our world. He

was made flesh; he took upon him the form of a servant. He was born in a stable, in Bethlehem of Judea. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man. He went about doing good, healing the sick and giving sight to the blind. He was persecuted, betrayed, condemned, crucified, and laid in a tomb.

But it was not possible that he should be holden of death. He arose, showed himself unto his disciples, and ascended into heaven. And now at the right hand of God, exalted, he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

He is the Saviour of the world. He offers himself as such to fallen man. None are so vile that they can not be forgiven, if they repent of sin and come to him. For he came into the world to save sinners, and his blood cleanseth from all sin.

Prayer-Meeting Week.

THE week of special prayer for the conversion of the world, annually observed by many churches, was a season of peculiar and solemn interest in Fulton street.

Rev. Dr. Vermilye conducted the services on Monday. The order of subjects for prayer was much the same as that adopted by the Christian Alliance, at its meeting at Geneva, Switzerland, some months since. Most of the hour was spent in prayer. It was a season of deep feeling and humiliation. A few days ago, Rev. Mr. Morrison was present from Northern India, and twenty-four years on missionary ground,

who had been the means of originating the world's week of prayer. He had urged upon the missionaries to invoke the churches throughout the world to observe the week of prayer. With a quivering lip and faltering voice he endeavored to make some mention of how God had answered prayer. Beyond — oh! yes; said he — beyond all our expectations, God has answered prayer by the effusions of his holy spirit upon missions and missionary effort. He could scarcely command his emotions when he remembered how universal had been the spirit of grace and supplication, and how universal had been the blessing to the churches. This call to prayer had been responsive to the great work which began in this country in 1858 and 1859, convincing Christians, by the great revival, of the *mighty power of prayer*.

Rev. Dr. Clark, of Brooklyn, conducted the meeting on Tuesday, and in the opening service dwelt upon the encouragements to prayer and effort and the fidelity of God's promises.

The subjects for prayer were those of home, the conversion of sinners, the cessation of vices, the spread of vital religion in our families and households, among our rulers and people, the high and low, the rich and poor, our soldiers and seamen, and the authors of our literature, both secular and religious. The meetings seemed to deepen in interest and fervor of prayer each day.

Rev. Mr. Reinke, a Moravian minister, conducted the devotions on Wednesday. The chief bur-

dens of prayer this day were revivals of religion in Eastern and Oriental lands, and for the conversion of the Jews of the old world and the new.

A minister of the Baptist Church led the meeting on Thursday, when many prayers were offered on behalf of a higher standard of piety and power among all ministers and their fellow-laborers; the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all our universities, colleges, schools; the conversion of the young in our Sabbath-schools, and other kindred subjects.

Rev. S. H. Tyng, Jr., conducted the meeting on Saturday, which, from its solemn and pervading interest, was the great day of the week of prayer-meeting impressions. One leading subject was that of the holy Sabbath, for its greater sanctification. As it became known that more or less were anxious for their souls, more fervent prayer was offered. The influence of this week will doubtless be felt in many hearts and minds for great and lasting good.

Double Answer to Prayer.

A YOUNG minister narrated to the Fulton-street prayer-meeting recently, nearly as follows: He had been invited to preach in a church near the east end of Long Island, which had been closed for a number of months. An earnest request had been sent to the Fulton-street meeting for prayer to God for his blessing on the effort. The church was reopened, and for many weeks there was preaching on the Sab-

bath, and often in the evenings during the week. The members were revived to new efforts and prayer for the conversion of sinners. God heard and answered. The preaching was blessed, and a considerable number became anxious for their souls. The number of hopeful conversions soon amounted to some thirty-five, if we heard correctly, and the work was still in progress. The preacher sat down after hearing this testimony to the answer given to prayer. Another minister arose immediately and said, there was another request sent up to the Fulton meeting for the same purpose, which his young brother had not probably heard of. It was for prayer on his behalf who went to preach to this church. One request was for prayer on behalf of the church; the other was prayer for the preacher, and both requests had been heard and answered.

The answers to prayer in the Fulton meeting have been so numerous and marked, that it would seem as if God delighted to answer prayers offered up at the altar of this solemn and consecrated spot.

"Don't you see the Angels?"

At the Fulton-street prayer-meeting, some days since, a pious father related, with deep emotion, the circumstances attending the death-scene of his little son, a lad of some ten years of age. He had been an attentive and faithful member of the Sabbath-school. He was a praying boy. He had given his young heart to the Saviour. He was quite an

example of Christian life and conduct. Recently he sickened, and his life rapidly drew toward its close. His friends and his pastor were gathered around his dying bed. He was calm and composed. He manifested no fear of death. He was in a frame of mind such as might be looked for in a case so marked. Suddenly, with intense gaze upward, he exclaimed: "Don't you see the angels?" His pastor at first supposed his mind might be wandering, and that his reason might be impaired from the effects of disease. He questioned him kindly; but with calmness and clearness of mental vision, he said: "Don't you see the angels?" The impression on the minds of his pastor and friends was, that he was favored with a vision of angels, though unseen by the eyes of all others in the room; yet to the mental eye of this little dying saint, the Saviour kindly granted him a sight of the angels, who do always behold the face of our Father in heaven, and that they were in waiting to carry his departing spirit safe to Abraham's bosom. The father sat down under deep feeling of the scene thus hastily sketched.

Interesting Conversions.

It is always instructive to observe the workings of the Holy Spirit in conversion. As an instance of this, we condense the following recent case from the *Christian Mirror*. The writer says:

"At the close of the service last evening, I noticed a young

lady just before me who seemed undecided about remaining to the inquiry meeting. Once or twice she rose to go, but finally sat down. When you asked those who felt that they loved Jesus to rise and sing a hymn, she kept her seat. After the hymn I leaned forward and asked her if *she* could not say she loved Jesus. She burst into tears. I then asked her if she did not wish to become a Christian. 'Yes,' she said, 'but I shall never be a Christian.' I begged her not to say so, and tried to lead her to the Saviour by telling her how ready he was to receive her, that he was more than willing, that he was waiting with outstretched arms to take her. But she said, 'No, Christ would never take her;' she had rejected him for three years. She had once had serious impressions, but had stifled them. During the last revival she had been somewhat concerned for her soul's salvation, but had danced all night afterward, and since then had never felt any further anxiety about it. For three years she had been treading Christ under foot, and in all that time had never offered a single prayer, even of words, to say nothing of the heart. You came and talked and prayed with her, but still her answer was, 'I can never be a Christian. Jesus will never take me.' You asked her if she thought she was a greater sinner than Paul. She said: 'Yes, for Paul thought he was doing God service, but she knew she was not.' She had ridiculed religion and these meetings, and came only to make sport of them.

You prayed with her again and left her with those who tried to persuade her to give her heart to Jesus then; but she could not believe, and went home sorrowing still.

"The next day she was invited to go to the afternoon prayer-meeting. She went, and her countenance still indicated her deep distress. She said she had passed a sleepless night, but could obtain no relief. When you spoke with her after meeting, she begged you, if you ever knew any one anxious for the first time, to entreat them, from her, not to delay, but to come to Jesus then. She thought Jesus would have taken her at first, but now it was too late. She had said that only weak-minded, nervous people were affected by this revival; now God was showing her her condition, but would not save her. She still insists that she can never be saved: that she is willing to give up every thing, but can never be a Christian. God grant that she may find that it is her own heart that is keeping her from her Saviour, and that she may yet find peace in believing.

"This young lady remained in that state of mind for two or three days and nights, unable to sleep or feel any peace till one night she remembered this verse: 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful

and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' Light broke in upon her. Yes, she said, I will trust him. I will believe. I have confessed my sins, and—'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' Oh! I will believe him! I will take him at his word.' She had begun to trust him, and she was very happy in doing so; she feels that Jesus is her only refuge, and she is determined to try and serve him, hoping that she may eventually find that peace and joy which makes the Christian's life a heaven begun below."

"Count the Cost."

It costs something to be a true Christian. Let that never be forgotten. To be a mere nominal Christian, and go to church, is cheap and easy work. But to hear Christ's voice, and follow Christ, and believe in Christ, and confess Christ, requires much self-denial. It will cost us our sins, and our self-righteousness, and our ease, and our worldliness. All—all must be given up. We must fight an enemy, who comes against us with twenty thousand followers. We must build a tower in troublous times. Our Lord Jesus Christ would have us thoroughly understand this. He bids us "count the cost."